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Motivation, rather than altered curriculum or instructional technique, was utilized to raise academic achievement in elementary schools which draw their student body principally from culturally disadvantaged Negro families. Four basic approaches were used to improve motivation in the schools: (1) Teachers and (2) parents were first persuaded that higher achievement was possible. (3) An appeal was made to the sense of pride and competitive spirit of the pupils. (4) Various community agencies were encouraged to join the campaign. The program has been encouragingly successful.

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ED001772

St. Louis, Mo.

EFFORTS IN THE BANNEKER DISTRICT TO RAISE THE ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF CULTURALLY DISADVANTAGED CHILDREN

(A Brief Statement)

(R1D) R1

The Banneker District is one of six administrative groups into which the St. Louis Public Elementary Schools are divided. As such, it is comprised of twenty-three elementary schools and has an enrollment of approximately 14,000 children of which approximately 95 per cent are Negro. The district has approximately 500 teachers, 16 principals, 2 general supervisors, 2 consultants (one in music, one in physical education) and an assistant superintendent. The children who are served by this district live in the underprivileged sections of the city and their parents fall on the lower rung of the socio-economic ladder.

Everyone concerned within the Banneker District is thoroughly convinced that the following two assumptions are true:

1. That I.Q. scores as they are currently arrived at are not truly indicative of either the capacity for or the likelihood of academic achievement of pupils.

2. That sufficiently strong and appropriate motivation rather than drastic alterations in current instructional techniques and curricular offerings can change academic apathy to energetic school activity leading to achievement.

This conviction underlies our program which might be appropriately called "Operation Motivation" and which was launched at the beginning of the school year, 1957-1958. This program had but one purpose - to raise the academic achievement of the pupils from kindergarten to grade eight in the elementary schools within the Banneker District through motivation - not altered curriculums or instructional techniques.

To this end, four simultaneous approaches were undertaken: (1) Convincing teachers that higher and more acceptable pupil achievement is possible through serious efforts on the part of all concerned to give children a vision of future employment opportunities and the direct relation of these opportunities to present day school work. Every effort was made to help teachers with middle class values and attitudes to understand that a genuine respect for the inherent worth and dignity of each child is the sine qua non to pupil inspiration; (2) Persuading parents to rise above the lethargizing effects of past racial discrimination and look forward

to a brighter and better future for their children through education and thus inspire these children by word and deed to regard school as the best means to self-fulfillment and upward mobility; (3) Appealing directly to the sense of pride and competitive spirit of the pupils themselves by showing them concrete proof that academic success is a definite pre-requisite to increased employment opportunities and success in life, and by giving them hints and suggestions for improving their study habits, and by encouraging them to greater academic effort through pep rallies, honor assemblies, and other types of extrinsic incentives; and (4) Appealing to various community agencies to join in the campaign to help children acquire a taste for and positive attitude toward school work.

We have had some success. Our situation is much better than ever before. The pupils are achieving better, attending school more often, and are better behaved than ever before. Our principals and teachers are working harder and are enjoying seeing some heartening results from their efforts. The parents are cooperating and are showing more concern regarding the school progress of their children. Our community agencies are offering unsolicited assistance. We are encouraged by these results and are determined not only to continue our four-pronged program, but to expand our efforts.

The articles listed below will give you an account of what we are trying to do:

TIME MAGAZINE, June 8, 1959 - Education Section
SOUTHERN SCHOOL NEWS, January, 1959 and June, 1959
EDUCATION U.S.A., December 15, 1960 - Published by NEA
LOOK MAGAZINE, September 16, 1961 page 38
LIFE MAGAZINE, January 26, 1962, Editorial
FORTUNE MAGAZINE, March, 1962
SATURDAY EVENING POST, April 14, 1962
SATURDAY EVENING POST, September 14, 1963
REDBOOK MAGAZINE, October, 1963
READER'S DIGEST, March, 1964

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